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1. Juvenile literature – Fiction
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1. Juvenile literature – Fiction
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THE

MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY;

OR,

THE BROKEN VASE;

FOR

LITTLE BOYS AND LITTLE GIRLS.

BY

MRS. HUGHS,
AUTHOR OF "THE GIPSY FORTUNE-TELLER," ETC. ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
LINDSAY AND BLAKISTON.
1849

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PREFACE.

"Dear Aunt Mary, to day is mamma's birth day, and, as we are to have holiday, we thought we would come and hear one of your pretty stories."

"Well my dears, I am pleas-

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Then again muttering to himself, he said:

"That bloated pitcher I'll burst in three."

"What, this pitcher?" cried the nurse, laughing; for she happened, at the time, to be pouring some milk out of a pitcher, to feed the baby with; "I really believe the boy is beside himself this morning. I never saw him behave in such a manner since he was born."

"Has anybody given you that to learn as a task?" inquired Louisa, as she looked over her

brother's shoulder, and read the words, "Frost's Visit;" but she waited in vain for a reply; the child had no ears for any such questions.

"Come, Gust;" said Ferdinand; "I have made a fine large kite, and I want you to come and help me to fly it;" and again he put his hand on the child's shoulder.

"I do n't want to;" returned the boy, trying to release himself from his brother's hold; and then muttering, "The downward point of many a spear."

"Why, that sounds quite warlike, Gust;" continued the elder brother, laughing; "but come, I must really know what all this is about. Who told you to learn this off? and let me see what sort of a thing it is that you are learning. Perhaps it is only a jumble of words, that you don't understand; and, if so, it is a pity for you to bother yourself;" and, as he spoke, he attempted to take the book out of the young student's hand.

"I understand almost all of it;" cried Gustavus, grasping

the book with great tenacity; "but let me be; for if you plague me, I shall not get the money in time."

"Won't you tell me about it, Gust?" said Louisa, sitting down by the side of her little brother, and speaking to him in a gentle, coaxing tone.

"Yes; I will tell you all about it, if you will only not tease me after; for if you do, I cannot learn these verses in time; and if I do n't, my dollar will not be of any use."

"And who has promised you

a dollar for learning them?" asked the sister.

"Aunt Maria. She told me, last night, as soon as I could say them off perfectly, she would give me a dollar."

"But Aunt Maria did not mean that you were to pore over them all day, I am sure;" remonstrated Louisa.

"But I told myself that; because, as I said before, if I do n't get the dollar to-day, I care very little whether I get it at all or not."

"Why so? What do you

mean to do with it, when you get it."

"That's a secret," replied Gustavus, with an air of importance.

"Does Mamma know about it?"

"No; she is the very last person that I would think of telling."

"Then I am afraid it is not a very good thing, Gust;" said the sister, in a serious tone.

"Oh, yes; it is a very good thing;" interrupted Ferdinand; "I know what it is, and it is a

very good thing, I can tell you."

"You do n't know anything about it;" cried the little Gust.

"Yes, I do; I know perfectly well."

"Who told you?"

"Nobody told me."

"Then how can you know?"

"I know very well."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Do you wish me to say it out before Louisa and Nurse?"

"Gust knows well enough, that neither Nursy nor I would tell any of his secrets, if they

were harmless ones;" said Louisa.

"Yes; you may tell it before them;" returned Gustavus, "but remember, if you don't guess right, I will only tell you that you are wrong, without telling you anything more about it."

"Well, then; you want the dollar to-day, because to-morrow is Ma's birthday, and you want to buy something for a birthday present for her."

"He 's guessed it! he 's guessed it!" cried Gustavus, clapping his hands. "But mind;" con-

tinued he, with a look of great earnestness; "you must not, any of you, say a word about it."

"What put it into your head, Gust?" asked the sister.

"I will tell you. You and Ferdinand were talking in the garden, yesterday, about what you meant to buy as a birthday present for Mamma; and I was near enough to hear you, though you did not see me. It made me feel very sorry, to think that you could buy birthday presents for Ma, and I could not, though I was sure I loved her as well

as anybody did. Whilst I was standing so sorrowful, Aunt Maria came into the garden. She asked me what was the matter with me, and I told her; so she took a dollar out of her purse, and said she would give it me to do what I liked with. But then I told her that would not do; because it would be her present to Ma, and not mine."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Ferdinand, interrupting the little speaker; "that was well said, my boy! That was acting like a little man."

"Then she asked me," continued Gustavus, his eyes sparkling with pleasure at these expressions of approbation from his brother, to whom he was much attached; "if I could not do something to work for the money, and desired me to tell her what I would like best to do. But still, I did not think that was quite the right way; for it would not be work if I only did what I liked."

"Bravo! Bravo!" again burst from the applauding Ferdinand.

"Then Aunt Maria said:

'Well, then let me hear what you don't like to do.' So I told her I did n't like to learn poetry off by heart; and, at last, it was agreed that if I learnt 'Frost's visit,' that is in this 'Tiny Library,' which uncle Ferdinand sent me from London, and said it to her, very perfectly, to-day, she would give me a dollar."

"And do you think you will be able to say it?" asked Louisa.

"I am not quite sure. There is one verse that I find pretty hard."

"Perhaps you do not quite understand it?"

"I believe I don't," replied the little boy; "and I fancy that is one reason why it seems so hard."

"Well, suppose I hear you, and see how much you know of it? and then we can, may be, explain the rest to you, so as to make it easier to you to learn."

Gustavus seemed to be very thankful for this proposal; and after reading it all over once more, he put the book into his

sister's hand, and then repeated, with tolerable correctness, the following verses by Miss H. F. Gould; the beauty of which, we hope, will be a sufficient apology for our intruding them upon the young reader.

FROST'S VISIT.

The Frost looked forth one still, clear night,
And he said, "Now I shall be out of sight;
So through the valley, and over the height,
In silence I'll take my way;
I will not go on like that blustering train,
The wind and the snow, the hail and the rain,
Who make so much bustle and noise in vain,
But I'll be as busy as they!"

Then he went to the mountain, and powdered
its crest,
He climbed up the trees, and their boughs he
dressed
With diamonds and pearls, and over the breast
Of the quivering lake he spread
A coat of mail, that it need not fear
The downward point of many a spear
That he hung on its margin, far and near,
Where a rock could rear its head.

He went to the windows of those who slept,
And over each pane like a fairy crept;
Wherever he breathed, wherever he stepped,
By the light of the moon were seen
Most beautiful things. There were flowers and
trees—
There were bevies of birds, and swarms of bees—
There were cities, thrones, temples, and towers!
—and these
All pictured in silver sheen!

But he did one thing that was hardly fair;
He went to the cupboard, and finding there
That all had forgotten for him to prepare,
"Now just to set them a thinking,
I'll bite this basket of fruit," said he,
"This bloated pitcher I'll burst in three,
And the glass of water they've left for me,
Shall tchick, to tell them I'm drinking!"

"Pretty well!" said Louisa, as the little boy ceased speaking; "it is only the third verse that you have any difficulty about."

"That is the verse that I don't understand;" returned Gustavus; "I cannot tell what is meant about the birds and bees,

and flowers and cities, and all those things."

"Why, don't you know, Gust," said Ferdinand, "how often we have amused ourselves with fancying trees and houses, and all sorts of figures, on the windows, after a cold, frosty night?"

"Yes; is that what is meant?"

"To be sure it is. Is not all that the frost's doing?"

"Yes! But what is meant by silver sheen?"

"Sheen means brightness Now, you know when the sun

or the moon is shining on the frosted panes, they look white, like silver; and that is what is meant by silver sheen."

"Now I understand," cried the little boy, his countenance brightening as his ideas became cleared; "now, Louisa, let me read that verse once more over, and then try me again."

The verse was once more studied, and then the whole was repeated clearly and distinctly, without either mistake or hesitation.

"Now you may go to Aunt Maria as soon as you like," said the sister, returning the book with a smile of approbation; "and I am sure she will say that you repeat it exceedingly well."

"I will go and say it directly, lest I should forget it again;" returned he.

"Yes," said Ferdinand, laughing; you will be wise to do so, for though you engaged to put it into your head, you did not promise that it should not run out again."

"And come back as soon as you get the dollar;" added the sister; "for we are going to ask Ma's leave, and take a walk, and mean to buy our presents whilst we are out."

The poetry was said, the dollar received, and the happy boy joined his brother and sister, with a heart palpitating with delight at the idea that he had proved his affection for his dear mother, by doing what was exceedingly unpleasant and laborious to him, for the sake of hav-

ing some little token of love to present to her.

What their different presents were to be, was a subject of discussion with them for a considerable time; and and as their opinions varied on this important point, Louisa at length proposed that they should call and beg Emeline Fisher, a young friend who was a great favourite with all three, to go and assist them with her judgment.

This was immediately agreed to; and they hastened to the

house of Mrs. Greenhough, the aunt of Emeline, with whom she lived; for the poor girl was a dependent orphan. On arriving there, however, and being shown into the room where their friend was, they found her in great distress; and in reply to their inquiries as to the cause of her grief, they were told by her, that she had, only a short time before, been so unfortunate as to break a handsome china vase, that her aunt had bought the day previous, by letting it slip

through her fingers while dusting it. Ferdinand and Louisa knew well the stern and rigid temper of the relative whose displeasure poor Emeline dreaded so much; and they stood for some time, watching with heartfelt commiseration her tears, as they coursed each other down her cheeks.

"What did your aunt say about it?" Ferdinand at length inquired.

"She does not know anything about it, yet," replied the weep-

ing girl. "She went into the country early this morning, and will not be back till to-morrow. But I know well how angry she will be; for when it was brought home yesterday, she told the waiter that nobody was to dust it but myself, as there was only one more like it in the city; so that, if it were broken, it was not likely she would be able to replace it. I believe," continued the poor girl, her tears gushing out afresh at the thought, "it was the anxiety which she expressed

that was the very cause of its being broken; for I actually trembled when I touched it."

"But when you know that your fault was a very unintentional one," remonstrated Louisa, "you ought not to let her scolding distress you so much."

"Oh, if scolding were all that I had to dread," returned Emeline, I could make up my mind to that; but I know she will punish me by not letting me go to see sister, who is much worse, and not expected to live many days."

"She surely would not refuse to let you go under such circumstances?" urged Ferdinand Emeline only shook her head and wept.

"I wonder how much the vase cost?" said Louisa.

"Aunt says she only paid five dollars for it," replied her friend; —"not one-fourth of its value; but Mrs. Colton, who has them to sell, does not know the price of such things. But it might as well have been twenty dollars, or a hundred, for that matter, as

far as I am concerned; for I have no means of raising such a sum as five dollars."

Ferdinand and Louisa exchanged looks, and seemed to read each other's countenance; and, at the same moment that they did so, Gustavus pulled his sister's frock, in token that he wanted to whisper something to her; which Louisa understanding, motioned to him to be silent for the present: then she turned to her friend, and kissing her affectionately, she said, "Try to

compose yourself, my dear Emeline, and indulge the hope that things will not be so bad as you imagine. Keep up your spirits, I beg, and depend upon it, you will be allowed to go to your sister as soon as your aunt returns."

Emeline again shook her head despairingly, and her young friends took their leave.

"Louisa," said Gustavus, the moment the door had closed upon them, "I want to give Emeline my dollar."

"I believe we are all of one mind," said Ferdinand; "and, therefore, there does not need to be much said upon the subject. Louisa and I have each two dollars, and your one will just come in to make up the five. So let us go straight to Mrs. Colton's, and purchase the other vase; and though we have no birthday presents to offer Ma, we can give her a kiss of love and our warm wishes, and that is as much as she either expects or desires."

"But I have something still to give her!" said Gustavus, in a tone of exultation; "only it is not anything that I have worked for."

"And I know something that I have to give her, too!" said Louisa; "and I know it is not the splendour of the gift, but the feelings with which it is presented, that will make it valuable to her."

"And with that consideration I shall be able to find something or other to bring to her as my

offering of love," said Ferdinand; and they pursued their way with all alacrity to purchase the remaining vase. This was soon done; and with hearts throbbing with pleasure at the idea of performing an act of kindness to an amiable and persecuted friend, they hastened back to Mrs. Greenhough's,—Ferdinand being the joyful bearer of their newly acquired treasure, — whilst Gustavus, scarcely able to contain himself with delight, followed in a sort of half run,—so much

was he afraid of his brother and sister getting before him, and he not being by to witness Emeline's surprise and pleasure. The moment the street door was opened they all three flew into the room. "Here, Emeline," said Ferdinand, gaily, "we have brought you a jar to hold your tears!"

"Oh, no," added Louisa, "it contains a specific to dry them up!"

"And to help you to smile again;" put in the little Gustavus.

"But what does it mean?—where did it come from?" asked the astonished Emeline.

"It came from Mrs. Colton's, and is brought here for the purpose of setting your mind at ease, by supplying the place of the broken piece of china, over which you have shed so many tears," said Ferdinand.

"And of convincing you that though you meet with much unkindness, you still have friends who love you very sincerely, dear Emeline," said the amiable and

warm-hearted Louisa, as she put her arms round the neck of her friend, and kissed her affectionately.

"I see how it is; you have purchased the vase for me with your own money. But though I feel most grateful for the kindness, it pains me to think that it may be a long time before I shall be able to repay you."

"We don't want to be repaid," said Gustavus; who pushed his sister aside that he himself might clasp his arms about the neck

of one who had never considered herself too old to be kind and attentive to a little boy.

"The money was our own,' continued the little fellow, "and we are all very happy to think we had enough to buy the vase, and save you from the scolding of your cross old aunt."

"And to enable you to be with your poor sick sister," added Louisa.

"It will be a comfort to her in her last moments to hear what kind friends I have," said Eme-

line; whose tears again started to her eyes at the thought of her sister's danger.

"I mean to take these away with me as the articles that we have purchased, and so settle accounts between us," said the lively Ferdinand, beginning, as he spoke, to gather up the fragments of the broken vase, which still lay scattered where they had at first fallen. "They will serve me for trying a receipt upon, that I saw lately, for the mending of broken china. And

should I succeed in putting the pieces together, Louisa shall have the vase for her flowers, and it shall be called the 'Resurrection vase.' So come, Louisa, let us go;" he continued, having gathered up all the fragments, "for I am in a hurry to begin my experiment." Louisa, who saw immediately that his motive was to put a stop to any further expression of Emeline's gratitude, readily obeyed the summons; and Gustavus, though he did not exactly see their mo-

tive, was of too generous a character not to wish to avoid the thanks with which he saw Emeline's breast was swelling, and, therefore, clasping his arms once more round her neck, and pressing his lips on her cheek with a hearty smack, he ran out of the room, and was very soon by the side of his brother and sister.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the walk home of these amiable young people was cheerful and pleasant. They had, it is true, given up an object that

they had had very much at heart, —that of proving to their affectionate mother, that they felt it their duty to offer a reciprocation of that tenderness which had always been exhibited so conspicuously towards them on similar occasions;—but besides the consideration that their parent was alike unconscious of their having been hoarding up their money, and of the object to which it was to have been appropriated, they were very well convinced, that had it all

been known to her it would really give her much more pleasure to hear how they had afterwards disposed of it, than she could have derived from any offering to herself. "We can show that we love her, though we have nothing to give," said Ferdinand; "And, after all, it is the love only that would be valuable."

With this reflection, he hastened, as soon as he got home, into his own room; and banished all regrets, by busying himself about

preparing the cement with which he hoped to repair the broken vase; an operation which Gustavus inspected with great interest. This, however, did not engage his attention so much as to prevent his making frequent excursions to his little garden, in which was a small cherry-tree that had begun that season, for the first time, to bear fruit; and though a single bunch, consisting of three cherries, was the whole of the crop, he looked with exultation at their bright

red colour, and dwelt, in imagination, with no small delight on their luxurious sweetness. Louisa, on the other hand, spent the chief part of her time in watching some beautiful China roses, which were rapidly unfolding their velvet leaves. She had hitherto been almost a niggard of these flowers; resolutely refusing to allow one of them to be pulled, even when strongly urged to place one in her hair when dressed for a party. "I should not have half so much

pleasure from being ornamented with it to-night, as in looking at it to-morrow, in all its freshness and beauty;" was her reply.

At length the morning arrived on which they had anticipated so much pleasure in offering their birthday presents to their beloved mother; and having all three come down stairs pretty much at the same time, the question "Where's Ma," was put simultaneously to Nurse; and being told that she had just taken the baby down to the breakfast-

room, they hastened, as with one accord, out of the nursery. The lovely Gustavus was the first to open the breakfast-room door; and hastening to his mother, with his three ripe cherries in his hand, he said, with the sweetest smile, "Dear Ma, will you let me have the pleasure of seeing you eat these cherries on your birth-day?" But before she had time to reply, Louisa had placed a jar filled with her beautiful China roses on the table; saying, as she did so, "I

would not have pulled these roses for anything, but as a birthday present for my dear Mamma;" whilst Ferdinand advanced, holding out a tumbler of fresh milk, and saying with a smile, as he did so, "This seems a curious birthday offering, dear Mother, but it is all I have to give, and I am inclined to hope that the thought of my love and kind wishes will serve to make it sweet."

And here let us pause, and think where we could find a

sweeter picture than this happy mother, with her three amiable and affectionate children, each striving to testify their pure and ardent love; whilst the playful infant stretched out its little arms, eager to grasp whatever came within its reach.

"It was unnecessary, my children, to give yourselves any concern about birthday offerings;" said the delighted parent; "your own dutiful and amiable conduct is to me the best of all tokens of your affection."

Scarcely had she said this and ate the cherries, drunk the milk, and smelled at and admired Louisa's roses, as the best way that she could show her sense of their kindness, when the door opened, and Emeline Fisher entered the room.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Winthorp," she said, "for intruding upon you, at this moment, when I know you are so particularly engaged with your children; but I come with the hope of increasing your happiness, instead of disturbing it."

She then explained, in a very animated manner, the circumstance of the broken vase, and of her having heard from the nurse the original appropriation of the money by which it was replaced. Before she had ceased speaking, the mother's eyes were filled with tears; and turning to her children as soon as Emeline paused, she said, in a tone of deep feeling, "You were, indeed, right, my own darlings, in supposing you would conduce more to my happiness, by foster-

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ing these Buds and Blossoms of affection, than by the richest gifts that money could purchase. You have made this a birthday that it will always be delightful to me to remember."

THE END.

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